



the gull

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Number 9

Birding Australia and New Zealand

Evolution took a different track "down under" where most of the endemic mammals carry their young in pouches and mound-building birds hatch their eggs the way turtles do. Bob and Dora Conrath (both former GGAS Board members) will take us on a birding trip from the tropical heat of northern Australia to the antarctic winds of southern New Zealand. We will do it the easy way at our October general membership meeting— with slides.

The meeting will be on Thursday, October 14, at 7:30 p.m. in Building C, Room 300 (third floor), of the Fort Mason Center, Marina and Laguna in San Francisco. Please bring families and friends.

—PROGRAM COMMITTEE

National Audubon's 77th Annual Dinner

Here is your opportunity to attend the Society's annual dinner without crossing the continent. On Thursday, November 4, at 6:30 p.m. in Los Angeles at the Biltmore Hotel, the Society inaugurates a policy of bringing this occasion to a location convenient for its members in a new section of the country. Reservations for the dinner are available (\$30 per person) from NAS, 1414 Fair Oaks Ave., Suite 6, South Pasadena, CA 91030, telephone (213) 441-3466. Checks should reach that office before October 29. Reservations will be confirmed at the door.

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Field Trips Calendar

See the September *Gull* for the following trips:

Sunday, October 3—Point Reyes

Sunday, October 10—Sunol Regional Park.

Wednesday, October 13—Mini trip to Aquatic Park, Berkeley, and other nearby shoreline areas. Meet at **9 a.m.** in the northwest corner of Spenger's parking lot to carpool. We should see returning shorebirds and migratory ducks. Lunch optional; rain cancels trip. Leaders: Delpha de Timofeev and Ruth Voss (525-8032).

Saturday, October 16—San Mateo Coast. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the Pescadero Beach parking lot at the intersection of Hwy. 1 and Pescadero Rd. Please carpool to this point if possible because parking is limited. We will bird at Pescadero, then along the coast to Año Nuevo (\$2 per car). Bring lunch and a jacket; the weather can be cold along the coast. We will be looking for shorebirds. Leader: Alan Hopkins (585-5669).
(✓)

Sunday, October 17—Bodega Bay. Meet at **9 a.m.** in the upper parking lot at the Tides Restaurant. (The lot is located on the east side of Hwy. 1 next to the Union gas station.) Our first stop will probably be Doran State Park which has a \$2 per car day-use fee. From there we'll bird the perimeter of the Bay, Bodega Head and, if people want to stay after lunch, the Salmon Creek area, "Tilt City," or . . .?

Lunch optional. Bring clothes adaptable for anything from rain, fog or cold winds to calm and lovely weather. You can't tell what it's going to be like in Bodega Bay by looking at the weather in the Bay Area that morning.

Camping is available at Doran or Bodega Dunes state parks and motel accommodations are reportedly good at the Best Western Bodega Bay Lodge — (707) 875-3525 — if you want to come up Saturday. Leader: Nancy Conzett (527-2593) or (707) 875-2231. (✓)

Saturday, October 23—Lake Merced, San Francisco. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the south end of Sunset Blvd. in the Lake Merced Circle. This is a good time to see wintering grebes and ducks. If you take the #72 bus be sure to get off at Ocean Ave. because the next stop is Winston Dr., about one-half mile away. Lunch is optional for this half-day trip. Leader: Aileen Picerson (587-4163).

Saturday, October 30—Abbott's Lagoon. Meet at **8 a.m.** at Section H at the Larkspur Ferry Terminal. The terminal is just east of the Sir Francis Drake Blvd. exit from Hwy. 101. You may also meet the group at **9 a.m.** at the parking lot at Abbott's Lagoon. We will walk about four miles. Bring a lunch and liquids to carry with you. Dress for variable weather. Bring a scope if you have one. We will be looking for water-

birds. Rain cancels trip. Leader: George Hugenberg (526-5289). (✓)

Sunday, October 31—Garin Ranch and Hayward regional parks. Listen and look for land and shorebirds along the trails of these very different regional parks. We will walk three to four miles. Bring your goodies for a leisurely lunch. Garin Park has picnic tables next to the pond. Take Industrial Parkway off Hwy. 17 to Mission Blvd. (Hwy. 238 in Hayward). Turn right (south) on Mission, then first left turn (0.2 miles) into Garin. Meet at the parking lot at end of Garin at **8:15 a.m.** (\$1 entrance fee good for both parks). In the afternoon, you can find us at the Hayward Shoreline Park. Off Hwy. 17 take Winton Ave. exit west; Shoreline Park is at end of road. Leader: Marie Mans (284-7681). (✓)

Sunday, November 7—Tennessee Valley. Meet at **9 a.m.** and bring lunch. Going north across the Golden Gate Bridge, take the Mill Valley exit under the Richardson Bay Bridge and in one-half mile turn left at the Tennessee Valley sign. Drive to the end of the road. We will walk on the flat trail looking for land and sea birds. Leader: Betty Short (921-3020 during work hours). (✓)

Saturday, November 13—Coyote Hills Regional Park. Meet at **8 a.m.** in the parking lot by the visitors' center. From Hwy. 17 take the Jarvis Ave. exit in Newark and continue to Newark Blvd. and turn north. Follow the signs from there to the park. We should see common waterfowl, shorebirds and landbirds. Leader: David Rice (521-4966). (✓)

Sunday, November 14—Briones Regional Park. Meet at **8:15 a.m.** at the second parking lot at the Bear Creek Rd. entrance. Take Hwy. 24 east to the Orinda turnoff. Turn left and follow San Pablo Dam Rd. about two miles to the Bear Creek Rd. turn off. Turn right and drive about two miles to Briones Regional Park entrance. Carry lunch and liquids for a five-mile hike. The terrain is somewhat hilly. We should see many of the common wintering birds of the interior areas of the East Bay. Leader: Pete White (229-1714). (✓)

Carpooling arrangements can be made for trips marked (✓). Call Kate Partridge at 236-9053 and leave a message. She will contact you.

Problems: If for any reason you have difficulty getting in touch with a field trip leader or need information regarding a trip, call Shirley Kelly (387-8290) or the GGAS office (843-2222).

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

New Checklist!

GGAS is proud to present a brand-new *Checklist of Birds of the East Bay Region, California (Alameda and Contra Costa counties)* by Richard A. Erickson. It has the July 1982 *American Ornithologists' Union* revisions and changes in names and classifications and is completely up-to-date. It is available at the GGAS office for 25 cents. Mail orders must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope (legal size).

August Observations – Through August 26

SUMMERING LOCALLY

Both adult Little Blue Herons continued to be seen at Charleston Slough through August 22 (mob, KH). The lone Harlequin Duck remains at Año Nuevo (mob) and the Fish Docks Old Squaw was still there August 15 (BDP). A Common Goldeneye, infrequently seen here in summer, was at the Albany mudflat August 16 (JZ). The **Black Oystercatcher** was refound at the Bay Bridge Toll Plaza July 31 and August 1 (JZ). Marbled Murrelet families normally summer along the shores closest to their inland nesting forests, dispersing later in the year. Therefore, an apparent juvenile off Drakes Beach July 25 (DT) was an interesting location. Last but not least (!), two Pygmy Nuthatches at Skyline Blvd. and Wilton Rd. in the Oakland Hills August 5 (MG) were in the same area as last winter's flock. Perhaps they will become permanent residents.

SCARCE OR VAGRANT MIGRANTS

Four Red-necked Grebes off Drakes Beach August 19 (PW) again demonstrated that the north edge of Drakes Bay is the favored site for individuals just back from breeding. Among the month's Lesser Golden Plovers, two at Bodega Bay August 6 (BR) were early and one at the Lodi Sewage Ponds August 22-26 (DY, KH, PWi) was unusual inland. Now that observers are learning the correct identification of juvenile Semipalmated Sandpipers the number of credible reports is increasing. Singles were at Horseshoe Pond by Drakes Beach August 15 (TB, JG, SW), Charleston Slough August 18 (LB), Lodi Sewage Ponds August 19-26 (DY, KH, PWi) and four were at Elkhorn Slough August 21 (DR).

The male Indigo Bunting at Waddell Beach, Santa Cruz County, August 1 (KM) may have been a spring vagrant that summered in California or an early fall vagrant. A Yellow-headed Blackbird visited Charleston Slough July 31 (CR).

Observers: Louis Bevier, Tony Briggs, Dennis Bromley, Brad Goodhart, Michael Green, Jeff Greenhouse, Kem Hainebach, Bob Hirt, Peter LaTourette, many observers (mob), Kevin Monahan, Joseph Morlan, Benjamin D. Parmeter, Cliff Richer, Bob Richmond, Don Roberson, Dorothy Tobkin, Phil Unitt, Bruce Walker, Peter White (PW), Peter Willman (PWi), Steve Wilson, David Yce, Jon Zablackis.

—STEPHEN F. BAILEY, *Observations Editor*
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology,
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720
(phone 548-9507 or Joe Morlan at 524-7421)

Conservation Notes

THE WATER CONSERVATION INITIATIVE IN NORTHERN ALAMEDA COUNTY

This year is a watershed year in California water policy. For 130 years the major thrust of state water planning has been exclusively development of new water supplies. However, with the voters' overwhelming defeat of Proposition 9 — the Peripheral Canal — in June because it was too costly and too environmentally destructive, the stage is set for a new approach to state water policy — one that promotes conservation and efficient use of existing water supplies *before* developing new supplies. Voters have a chance to support this concept in the form of Proposition 13, the Water Conservation Initiative on the November ballot.

The Initiative faces substantial and well-financed opposition from agribusiness, large Southern California water agencies and the State Chamber of Commerce. This time the huge Salyer and Boswell cotton-growing companies, who opposed the Peripheral Canal, are against the Initiative so their considerable resources are on the other side. Because of this opposition, a significant grassroots effort is needed to pass the Initiative and turn state water policy around.

Locally a Northern Alameda County Yes on 13 Committee has formed, with Gary Weatherford (540-7572, evenings) and Pati Johnson (653-8026, days and evenings) as Co-Chairs. Subcommittees have been set up: Voter Contact, Brad Welton, Chair (530-2202, home); Fundraising, Jim Gittelsohn, Chair (848-7861, home); Speakers' Bureau, Doug Patton, Chair (835-2565, days); Endorsements, Dave Elefant (393-9274, days) and Steve Weisman (659-3316, evenings). Audubon members interested in getting involved in the campaign should call one of the above or Helen Burke, Northern California Coordinator for the Statewide Yes on 13 Committee (527-0176).

The committee meets every other Tuesday (October 12 and 26) at the First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way, corner Dana St., in Berkeley at 7:30 p.m. promptly. Subcommittees meet periodically; meeting times and places can be obtained from chairpersons. For literature and latest information call 558-8580 at state headquarters, 2217 Market St., San Francisco. Plans are afoot to open an Alameda County Yes on 13 office.

—HELEN BURKE

BENEFIT WHITE-WATER RAFTING TRIPS

Through October there will be daily and weekend white-water rafting trips on the American River. All proceeds go to support the Water Conservation Initiative, Proposition 13, on the November ballot. For infor-

mation and reservations phone Tina Blaine at (415) 558-8580. Cost is \$30 per person on weekdays and \$40 per person on weekend days. Sponsorship is by the California Water Protection Council.

MORE MONOPHILIA

An important date is coming up on the fund-raising calendar for the Mono Lake Committee. Inspired by the creation and donation of a large, all-wool tapestry by Rusty Brockman, an "ARTS DRAWING" will take place November 19. Following her lead, Stephen Johnson has contributed one of his color photographs and Lady Jill Mueller has offered one of her paintings of Mono Lake. In addition to these generous gifts, there are 34 other items of brass, stoneware, wood and prints donated by the National Audubon Society from its catalogue inventory. A corps of volunteers interested in the worthy, watery cause of saving Mono Lake is selling tickets for the drawing. The bottom line is that much green stuff (\$s) is needed to keep water flowing into the lake to keep it blue and various creatures alive. It is the hope of the artists that their donations will catalyze the donations of many dollars from others to keep the like from becoming a dust bowl.

Tickets are as near as your telephone. Call any of the following volunteers: San Francisco, Shirley Kelly (387-8290) and Ginny Nielsen (587-6462); East Bay, Laura Levy (763-1848), Mildred Bennett (526-1260) and Suzanne Luther-Methvin (376-9422); Marin, Betty Warren (332-9558) and Richard Kilborne (892-9224); Contra Costa, Genevieve Sattler (685-5315). Alternatively, you may obtain tickets at the Sierra Club store, 530 Bush St., San Francisco, and S.F. Bay Chapter office, 6014 College Ave., Oakland. By mail, tickets are available if you send your check made payable to Mono Lake Committee for \$5 for 6 or \$10 for 12 tickets (or more money for more tickets) to: MLC, c/o M. Bennett, 2719 Marin Ave., Berkeley, CA 94708. The appropriate number of tickets will be entered with your name, address and phone number. Single tickets are \$1 each. The need is NOW! Please try to give some time and money.

Call 526-1260 to find out if there's still space available on the tax-deductible fund-raising cruise (for Mono Lake, of course) on Sunday, October 17, from the Berkeley Marina into the north bay and marshlands of the lower Delta.

—MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

LEAST TERN UPDATE

A total of 75 Least Tern nests were initiated at Naval Air Station, Alameda, during the 1982 nesting season. The nests represented an estimated 74-75 pairs of Least Terns. Most nests hatched successfully. However, sometime between June 12 and June 16 14 nests were prematurely

abandoned and the chick population drastically declined. The remaining chicks and those hatched subsequently continued to disappear until June 22 when only one chick remained, possibly to fledge.

Observations suggest that cats were the main cause for the failure of colony chicks to fledge successfully. However, a female American Kestrel was also responsible for the loss of some chicks before she was live-trapped and relocated. Again, several chick deaths were attributed to hypothermia. Both predators, combined, probably resulted in the premature abandonment of the 14 nests in incubation.

Fortunately, as many as 31 pairs may have renested at Bair Island (South Bay) while 9-17 pairs apparently renested at the Oakland Airport. Leora Feeney and I are still following the progress of the Oakland colony. Seven nests have hatched young successfully and 8-9 of 11 young have fledged successfully so far.

—LAURA COLLINS

Waterbirds Class

A course entitled *Central Valley Waterbirds* is the latest in the series taught by Dr. Stephen F. Bailey at Albany Adult School and sponsored by GGAS. Suitable for beginners through experienced intermediate birders, the course will introduce about 60 waterbird species found in California's Central Valley during the colder months. Waterfowl and waders predominate and nearly all species are also found around the San Francisco Bay. The emphasis will be on status and identification.

Slide lectures will meet 7-9 p.m. on four Thursdays (October 21 and 22, November 4 and 18) at Albany High School. An optional privately-sponsored weekend trip November 20-21 to witness the immense concentrations of waterfowl at the Gray Lodge and Sacramento wildlife refuges will be available through the instructor.

For information on the course or the trip, call Steve at 548-9507. To register in the course call the Albany Adult School at 527-6811 or attend the first meeting of the class.

California Academy of Sciences Exhibit

Work of Tupper Ansel Blake, a well-known California wildlife photographer, will be on display at the Academy in Golden Gate Park beginning October 20. It is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the California Department of Fish and Game. The sampling of Blake's work in this exhibit includes Whistling Swans of the Delta, Bald Eagles of the Great Basin, Sea Otters of the Central Coast and numerous beautiful habitat photographs. Approximately 175 color photographs document the diversity of wild creatures and their habitats in California in seven geographic regions of the state.

Sutro Library Ornithological Exhibit

Through October 15 the Sutro Library, a branch of the California State Library, 2495 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, is showing colorful bird illustrations from its collection. It is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The library has an extensive collection of rare and interesting ornithological materials and should be known to serious students and other interested persons. Mrs. Eleanor Capelle, Senior Librarian, can be reached at 557-0374 for further information.

The Back Yard Birder

If you had to choose a favorite bird, what would it be? Difficult to select just one, isn't it? Certain qualities appeal to different people. It's not fair to try to compare the soaring eagle with the vivacious Mockingbird; the raucous Steller Jay with the sweet Chickadee; the regal Great Blue Heron with the darting hummingbird; the porcelain beauty of a Wood Duck with the Brown Towhee. We tend to anthropomorphize birds; i.e., to give them human qualities. I happen to like the "surprised" look (because of the eye rings) of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Owls are many people's favorites because of their wonderful looks and sounds.

Perhaps the more one knows about a specific bird, the easier to decide on a favorite. Certainly that must be what drives many ornithologists to spend a lifetime studying a species with which they have become enamored.

One of my recent favorites is the Wrentit. The Wrentit is the sole member of the *chamaedae*, or New World babbler family. This bird lives ONLY in Southern Oregon, California and Baja. Imagine having a species so unique right in our yards! Its distinctive "bouncing ping pong ball" voice can be heard ringing throughout brushy areas.

When we first moved to our new home 13 years ago there was little cover near our house but the hills were wooded and teeming with Wrentits which I could hear but never could spot. It was literally years before I saw this elusive little bird. There is nothing distinctive in its brown coloring, but its wren-like tail and light eyes and quick movements give it a perky mien.

Wrentits are extremely territorial and definitely prefer shrubby areas where they toil industriously, plucking insects from leaves. They have an ability to project their voices, so often you look where they are not. They are curious as well as very defensive of their nests, so they can be coaxed quite near by making kissing sounds. In return, they answer with

a constant rattle, hopping ever closer to get a better look at you. Usually they appear in pairs when they are not nesting.

The Point Reyes Bird Observatory has been conducting a study of its resident Wrentits, about which little has been known. Because of banding, specific birds can be observed. The study has made these plain brown birds more interesting, more endearing.

It appears that most Wrentits are monogamous, mating for life in many cases. In addition, their young remain in nearby territories after leaving the nest. They are virtually the only North American passerine species in which BOTH sexes defend territories by song. (The male's song is slightly longer with a trill on the end. To me, the female sounds more like a baby chick's peeping.) Both sexes also incubate; the male even develops a brood patch (the unfeathered skin on the underside of the breast with which incubating birds keep eggs and chicks warm). The nest, containing up to four blue eggs, is never unattended. This frees the non-incubating bird to forage for as long as needed. However, the birds are in constant voice contact. Their warning system is unmatched by other resident birds. For this reason, the success rate of raising young is much higher among Wrentits than in the White-crowned Sparrow, e.g.

For me, the "feigning behavior" of Wrentits is most engaging. It's not uncommon to see a grouse or other *gallinaceous* bird acting out a broken wing, distracting a predator from her nest or her young. This behavior is rare, however, in the *passerines*. Wrentits could win acting awards, according to the observers at Point Reyes. Within two to four feet of the nest, either one or both adults will stand on a branch, then fall forward in a swan dive, wings spread, fluttering to the ground. If ignored, the birds will repeat this act to to three times a minute for as long as ten minutes. What an exhausting performance!

Finding a Wrentit's nest is no mean feat! If you are willing to plow through underbrush and poison oak, you will be rewarded . . . maybe. Because one bird is incubating at all times, its mate is free to lead you on a merry chase, being in no hurry to return to the nest.

Roosting behavior is also interesting. Wrentit families tend to cluster together when roosting at night, often with their wings around their companions. This is probably further evidence of their closely-knit familial relationships.

Because of their uniqueness, their elusive nature and their engaging behavior, I find Wrentits my current favorite. Who knows which bird will capture my imagination next?

—MEG PAULETICH

The President's Corner

JOIN US! . . . on a field trip . . . on the Christmas Bird Count . . . on a committee . . . at a monthly membership meeting. We'd love to have you. Golden Gate Audubon has the largest membership of any local chapter in the country, yet many of you have never participated in any of our activities. It's your chapter and your participation and your input are wanted and valued. If nothing else, write us a letter or phone the office now and again to let us know your concerns, your feelings on chapter policy, new programs you would like GGAS to initiate or old programs you think should be continued or discontinued. Your Board of Directors cannot act effectively in a vacuum—we need your input. If you have the time and the inclination, drop by the office and see what we have in the library. And all of our committees encourage new members at any time—no prior experience necessary. So . . . JOIN US!

—JON ZABLACKIS

Band-tailed Pigeons in Berkeley?

Reports from 15 correspondents indicate that Berkeley's flock of Band-tailed Pigeons is seen regularly in Piedmont, Rockridge in Oakland, near Lake Temescal, at McGee and Berkeley Way, in the Creston Rd., and in the hill areas of Kensington and El Cerrito, as well as on St. Mary's Rd., Lafayette.

Descriptions of raucous behavior, endangered young fruit trees, over-taxed feeders, birds standing on other birds' backs and observations that these pigeons eat a lot, contrast with one who saw no more than three pigeons at a time and reports "a juvenile who visits frequently and has spent many pleasant hours sleeping in the empty feed dish."

Observers concurred that they appeared about ten years ago and that the increase has been gradual. A few have not seen the whole flock at one time, but most had. Anyone else see them?

News from the Ranch

As is the custom, the Ranch ended its season and was closed to the public on Independence Day. Approximately 18,000 people had passed through its gates, many of whom came from the Continent, Orient and other faraway places. Tribute is paid to the staff and the volunteer hosts and hostesses from Golden Gate, Sequoia, Madrone and Marin Audubon chapters who assisted.

The Volunteer Council has been active in planning its 1982-83 docent training program. Naturalists Ane Rovetta and Ray Peterson have been busy at Volunteer Canyon renovating the laboratory, rebuilding trails, providing a much-needed larger office space. Bouverie Audubon Pre-

serve now has a Docent Council and trainees have been selected for its fall class. The marine biology group of Ranch Associates at Audubon Cypress Grove are progressing in their studies of the Tomales Bay environment adjacent to it.

Rehabilitation of the exhibit hall, enlargement of the book store and the Ranch's office are under way in Picher Canyon. Appreciation and thanks to Clifford Conly for his work in redesigning the present structure.

Fall seminars are being planned; the information and reservation number is 868-0611.

—BETTY BOYD

Letters to the Editor

Thanks to all of you who wrote in response to the request for your comments about *The Gull*. Andrea Kieserman, Nancy Conzett and Meg Pauletich were praised by readers who enjoyed their recent contributions. Others expressed their thanks for the efforts of "all who keep us informed." Several writers asked questions and these have been referred to appropriate people for response. It was really pleasant to return to find a full pigeonhole.

—EDITOR

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

For GGAS

Gift of

Josephine J. Hughes
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In memory of

Belle Liddell
Dr. Harvey H. Greene

Dorothy L. Whitnah
Dr. and Mrs. S. T. Hersh

For Audubon Canyon Ranch

In memory of

Nell Mary Ryan

Blanche Vranina

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use for general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society including Audubon Canyon Ranch of which GGAS is a sponsor. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. to Minnie Groshong, Corresponding Secretary, Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2718 Telegraph Ave., #206, Berkeley, CA 94705-1179. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull* as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Corresponding Secretary.



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Office: 843-2222
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THE GULL

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

***The Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month.**